AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please revise paragraphs 39, 40, 59 and 88 as follows:

[0039]   The third service, referred to as "Hotseller Notification," automatically notifies users of titles that have become unusually popular within their respective communities. For example, a user within a particular hiking club might be notified that several other users within his club have recently purchased a new book on local hiking trails. In one embodiment, a community's "hotsellers" are identified by comparing, for each title on the community's bestseller list, the title's popularity within the community to the title's popularity within the general user population. The popularities of the titles are preferably based at least in-part on numbers of units sold~~————————~~, sold, but may be additionally or alternatively be based other types of criteria such as user viewing activities or user submissions of reviews and ratings.

[0040]   One such method that may be used to identify the hotsellers (or for generating community recommendations in general) involves applying an algorithm referred to as the censored chi-square recommendation algorithm to the purchase or other history data of users. The effect of the censored chi-square recommendation algorithm (when applied to purchase history data) is to identify a set of "characterizing purchases" for the community, or a set of items purchased within the community which distinguishes the community from a general user population (e.g., all customers). The results of the algorithm may be presented to users in any appropriate form, such as a community popular items list, a notification email, or a set of personal recommendations. The censored chi-square algorithm is described in the attached appendix, which forms part of the disclosure of the specification. Another such method that may be used to identify the community hotsellers involves comparing each title's velocity or acceleration within the community to the ~~titles's~~ title's velocity or acceleration within the general user population.

[0059]   In one embodiment (not illustrated), once the relevant set of "prior purchasers" has been identified, the system uses well known methods to determine whether any of these other users is ~~currenly~~ currently online. If one or more of the prior purchasers is online, the user is presented an option to send an instant message to prior purchaser(s), and/or to set up a private chat room for communicating with prior purchasers. Thus, the contact information may simply be in the form of an instant messaging box or other option for chatting online with specific users.

[0088]   Figure 8 illustrates the steps that are performed by the product detail page process 80C to generate detail pages (as in Figure 3) for participants in the Contact Information Exchange program. As indicated above, product detail pages can be accessed using any of the site's navigation methods, such as conducting a search for a title. In step 150, a list of the base communities of which the user is a member is ~~obtained~~ obtained either from a browser cookie or from the user database 82. In step 152, for each base community in this list, that community's product-to-member mapping table 86B (Figure 5) is accessed to identify any other users within the community that have purchased the product. In step 154, the contact information for each such user is read from the table 86B or from the user database 82. In step 156, the contact information and associated base community names are incorporated into the product's detail page. As indicated above, an option may additionally or alternatively be provided for the requester of the page to chat with any such other users that are currently online.

Please revise the abstract as follows:

A Web based system provides informational services for assisting customers in selecting products or other types of items from an electronic catalog of a merchant. Users of the system can create and join user communities, such as communities based on user hobbies, localities, professions, and organizations. The system also supports implicit membership communities that are based on email addresses (e.g., all users having a "nasa.com" email address), shipping/billing addresses, and other known user information. Using purchase history data collected for online users, the system automatically identifies and generates lists of the most popular items (and/or items that are becoming popular) within particular communities, and makes such information available to users for viewing. For example, in the context of an online book store users of the nasa.com community may automatically be presented a Web page which lists the bestselling book titles among nasa.com users, or may be sent email notifications of purchase events or hotselling books within the community. Another feature involves automatically notifying users interested in particular products of other users (preferably other members of the same community) that have purchased the same or similar products. For example, in one embodiment, when a user accesses a book detail page, the detail page is customized to include the names and email addresses of other members of the user's community that recently purchased the same book. A computer service associated with an electronic catalog of items enables users to explicitly elect to expose their respective purchase histories to other users. When a first user accesses an item in the electronic catalog, the service may notify the first user of one or more other users who have purchased the item. These other users may, for example, be contacts of the first user, or members of a community of which the first user is a member. The service may also facilitate communications between these users.